

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 000051

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/07/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: (U) DAWA MEMBERS THINK SHIA COALITION STILL FAR FROM DECISION ON PRIME MINISTER, RULE OUT DARK HORSE CANDIDATE

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT S. FORD
FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

1. (C) Summary: In separate meetings, senior Dawa Party members Ali al-Adeeb and Jawad al-Maliki thought the decision on whom the Shia Islamist camp would put forward as prime minister is still some distance off. They both acknowledged tough competition between current Prime Minister, and Dawa leader, Ibrahim Jafari and Deputy President Adil Abdel Mehdi. In a January 3 meeting, senior Da'wa party member Ali al-Adeeb stated that there had not been any progress on reaching an internal consensus within the Shia Coalition on the Prime Minister candidate, but was prepared to hold an internal vote to determine the candidate. In separate conversations on January 4 and January 5 senior Da'wa party member Jawad al-Maliki, told PolCouns that the competition between the two main Prime Minister candidates was increasingly fierce within the Shia Coalition. In a different spin from al-Adeeb, Al-Maliki reported that there was as yet no consensus within the Shia Coalition on the means for choosing a candidate; whether it would be by a vote or consensus. Neither of these top Da'wa party officials thought Fadilah's leader would win support as a compromise candidate between Jafari and Adil Abdel Mehdi. PolOffs emphasized the key points on government formation: the need for a unity government; no militia involvement in the key security ministries; and a competent Prime Minister who can work cooperatively with the rest of the government. Shia Coalition redlines, according to al-Maliki, were that the Prime Minister must be from within the Shia Coalition, and that there ought to be balance in the government structure. By balance, he added, the various groups' representation should reflect their achievements in the December 15 elections; if the Sunni Arabs won one-fifth of the seats in the Council of Representatives (COR), they should have no more than one-fifth of the executive positions in the new Government of Iraq. Al-Adeeb replied that Iraq was still a tribal community, making a unity government difficult. On any potential deals with the Kurds, Al-Adeeb admitted that the Kurds would play a pivotal role. As to promising the Kurds Kirkuk in exchange for supporting the Shia Coalition's PM candidate, al-Adeeb demurred that there would be both domestic and international consequences to such a decision. End Summary.

(U) Shia Coalition: Internal Disarray, But Fadilah Is Not an Option

2. (C) In a January 3 meeting, senior Da'wa party member Ali al-Adeeb stated that there had not been any progress on reaching an internal consensus within the Shia Coalition on the Prime Minister candidate. The two main contenders, Adil Abdul Mahdi and current Prime Minister Ibrahim Ja'afari, were both still vying for the position. Ideally, said al-Adeeb, the two would discuss between themselves who would step down for the sake of Shia Coalition unity; practically, the Shia Alliance was prepared to hold an internal vote to determine the candidate. The winner, he said, would be determined on strict majority rules (50 plus 1). If neither candidate managed to win this majority, then the possibility of a third party candidate could be raised. While there was no timetable by which the voting had to take place, al-Adeeb noted that nothing could be decided until after the hajj and Eid al-Adha (roughly January 10-12), when the majority of the Shia members would return to Baghdad.

3. (C) When pressed about the third candidate option, al-Adeeb replied that the independents in the Shia Coalition had raised the specter of a third party candidate. However, the consensus was that a third candidate could be anyone within the Shia Coalition, to include other candidates within Da'wa or Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). Al-Adeeb would not commit to this option, repeating

only that the idea "had been heard." Asked who he believed would be the next Prime Minister, al-Adeeb refused to commit himself, saying only that it was not yet clear. However, he stressed that Fadilah had no support whatsoever within or outside the Shia Coalition. PolOffs emphasized the Ambassador's key points on government formation: the need for a unity government; no militia involvement in the key security ministries; and a competent Prime Minister who can work cooperatively with the rest of the government.

14. (C) In separate conversations on January 4 and January 5, senior Da'wa party member Jawad al-Maliki, confirmed to PolCouns that the competition between the two main Prime Minister candidates was increasingly fierce within the Shia Coalition. He repeated Al-Adeeb's contention that no movement could be made until the members returned from the hajj, delaying a decision until late January. In contrast to al-Adeeb, Al-Maliki reported that there was as yet no consensus within the Shia Coalition on the means for choosing a candidate; whether it would be by a vote or by consensus, and if by vote whether it would be a two-thirds majority or a simple majority. He told PolCouns that the Shia would not begin deliberations until the IECEI certified the final results. (Comment: Maliki is very connected. His estimate would play out as follows: Shia Coalition members gather after the Eid to decide how to choose their prime minister candidate. They arrive at a decision about the time the election commission announces final, certified election results - roughly January 20. They then finish their internal negotiations and decide on a prime minister candidate roughly a week later - perhaps around January 27. It could, of course, be later. End Comment.)

15. (C) Asked where the Shia Coalition stands in the negotiations on government formation, al-Maliki stated that although Jalal Talabani would like to remain as President, many would prefer to see him out. (Maliki appeared to prefer a Sunni Arab president but recognized this might be too difficult.) If the Sunni Arabs did not get the presidency the Shia Coalition would have to offer the Sunni Arabs the post of Foreign Minister to forestall inevitable Sunni Arab complaints about "a Kurdish face of Iraq." Maliki warned that if the Sunni Arabs present too far-reaching a set of demands for joining a unity government, the Shia Coalition would drop them and make a separate deal with the Kurds. PolCouns reminded of the utility of a unity government. Maliki did not argue, but he then charged that the Americans are pushing too hard on the security ministries question. Dawa, he said, agrees that persons with ties to militias must stay out of the security ministries, but he warned that Baathists still hold too many positions in them as well.

16. (C) Al-Maliki did not produce a list of possible names for the new government. Instead, he anticipated that before naming ministers all sides must agree on a set of principles, much like the government program the Shia and the Kurds drew up last spring when setting up the transitional government. This time, however, al-Maliki stated that the Shia Coalition would ensure that the Kurds stood by their promises. For example, he claimed, in all the ministries this past year where the Kurds were in charge, they had moved in all Kurds to the top jobs.

17. (C) Shia Coalition redlines, according to al-Maliki, were that the Prime Minister must be from within the Shia Coalition, and that there ought to be balance in the government structure. By balance, he added, the various groups' representation should reflect their achievements in the December 15 elections; if the Sunni Arabs won one-fifth of the seats in the Council of Representatives (COR), they should have no more than one-fifth of the executive positions in the new Government of Iraq. In addition to selecting the ministers, the Shia Coalition would also pay close attention to the selection of the deputies, especially in the key security ministries.

(U) Role of the President?

18. (C) Al-Adeeb on January 3 said current President Jalal Talabani is the sole nominee for President, but noted somewhat ominously that no alternatives had been suggested. (Comment: It is not clear whether al-Adeeb was seriously suggesting that another candidate might appear, or laying down a marker that a Kurdish president was by no means a done deal. End Comment.) Adeeb opined that a Sunni Arab should not be a

candidate for president, since they had not really participated in the political process (as opposed to the Kurds), and even now were too fragmented to hold together. He simply said the Sunnis cannot be trusted.

19. (C) Al-Adeeb rejected calls to increase the powers of the presidency, stating that in the parliamentary system the Iraqis had chosen for themselves, the post of president was largely ceremonial. So far, however, al-Adeeb stated that the Kurds had not made any requests to increase the presidential powers; Talabani had only requested that the Prime Minister consult with the Presidency Council before taking any action. KDP Leader Masud Barzani, he noted, disagreed with Talabani on increasing the purview of the presidency.

(U) Quid Pro Quo: What Will You Offer the Kurds?

110. (C) Although Al-Adeeb admitted that the Kurds would play a pivotal role in selecting the next Prime Minister, al-Adeeb would not answer direct questions on what the Shia Alliance would be willing to offer the Kurds for their support. Instead, he blamed "non-official" Americans allegedly encouraging the Kurds to push for independence in contrast to the official American policy. The U.S. has supported the Kurds since 1992, setting the stage for the Kurds to establish their own state in preparation for independence, he claimed. An independent Kurdistan, however, will create regional tension. When Poloffs pushed back, reiterating that the U.S. was not seeking an independent Kurdistan, al-Adeeb countered that the Ambassador should hold a meeting with Shia, Sunni Arab, and Kurdish leaders and declare this publicly.

111. (C) As to whether the Shia would promise the Kurds Kirkuk in exchange for supporting the Shia Alliance's Prime Minister candidate, al-Adeeb demurred that the issue of Kirkuk is particularly delicate. There would be, he commented, domestic and international problems if such a decision was made without extensive consultations with international organizations and other ethnic groups in Kirkuk. Turkey, for example, would not be willing to accept such an arrangement. Al-Adeeb stressed, however, that the very fact that the Kurds are considering asking for Kirkuk implied that they were seeking independence. They could accept making Kirkuk a separate federal province if they planned to stay in Iraq. Adeeb warned that Kurdish demands would stop with Kirkuk; they would ask for at least half of Ninewa, causing confrontations with Christians and Shebak living there.

(U) Comment

112. (C) Neither of our interlocutors spoke particularly warmly about Dawa leader Jafari. Indeed, if Jafari gets the prime ministry, their ambitions for ministerial slots will be compromised in the other trade-offs. Al-Maliki is a much harder-line interlocutor within the Dawa Party than any of the Embassy's other Dawa interlocutors. He is particularly concerned about the composition of the security ministries. Although al-Adeeb is ranked third (behind Ja'afari and Maliki) in the Dawa party leadership, he appears to act mainly as a mouthpiece for the higher Shia leadership.
KHALILZAD